

Time for God – Take 2

Purpose: To assist the congregation with further reflection on the theme of the Sunday service/passage.

Week beginning Sunday 17 February 2019 Jesus challenge – Bread of Life

Pray that while being grateful for food, clothes, shelter and so much in terms of material well-being we would take much more seriously our spiritual needs and look to Jesus for those aspects of well-being that are largely ignored today but which make for “life in all its fullness”.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). By all means take in the feeding of the 5000 as well as the subsequent teaching. On Sunday we focussed on John 6:35-51.

Background John doesn't merely give us a blow by blow account of the what happened when and where. There is a full account of the feeding of the 5000 and the crowds reaction to it but he goes into much greater detail with Jesus' teaching of his own place in God's scheme of things in the light of it. Clearly, he was stretching the minds and the faith of his hearers. He wanted them to go deeper than simply providing a meal for them and he was averse to slipping into being the rebel leader that some were hoping he would be. Some found it too hard to understand though sometimes even now we can be slow to take in what we find too challenging. Jesus tries to convince his hearers that there is more to him than a miracle worker. He isn't only the messenger from God, he is, in his very person, the message. Was he saying that he was akin to the manna from heaven? He was pointing to himself as God's provision of real life, life in its deepest aspects, spiritual life, eternal life – pointing them to life that goes beyond our earthly span. Are we open to having our minds and faith stretched? How do we respond to Jesus' challenge to us today?

Possible questions/points to consider

1. Jesus met the pressing need for the crowds to be fed. He wasn't disinterested in people's earthly needs though he wasn't prepared to stop there. Given the widespread poverty across the world and even the large uptake in the use of foodbanks within this country, what does Jesus' concern to feed the hungry say to those of us who claim to be his followers? “You yourselves give them something to eat”. Why do you think there has been such a divide between the spiritual and the practical with many Christians being content to focus on one or the other?
2. Jesus tried hard to go beyond food and clothes and suggest not only that spiritual things matter but that HE was at the centre of God's plan to meet our spiritual needs. We all find it relatively easy to come up with a list of our material needs – a shopping list or ideas for what clothes/shoes we need however how often do we reflect on our spiritual needs? Take a few moments to review your own spiritual needs. If you are with others share the conclusions. How might we help one another to seek solutions? How far are we ready to “go to Jesus” for what is needed? Oh what peace we often forfeit of what needless pain we bear All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer. Comment.
3. It is patently obvious that many people don't see any need for the spiritual and it doesn't help if we Christians play down the spiritual. However, there are many areas of medicine for example which are either too hard for us to understand or which we choose to ignore where the medical profession are clear that changed behaviour would significantly improve our health. Ignoring such advice doesn't alter the facts. How might we learn from this with regard to spiritual lessons?
4. Please discuss/consider anything else that arises from the passage or service.

Prayer Lord thank you that Jesus wants to meet all our needs, material and spiritual, and is able to do so. Help us to be ready to seek his help and to point others to him too without creating a gulf between material and spiritual needs. Amen.